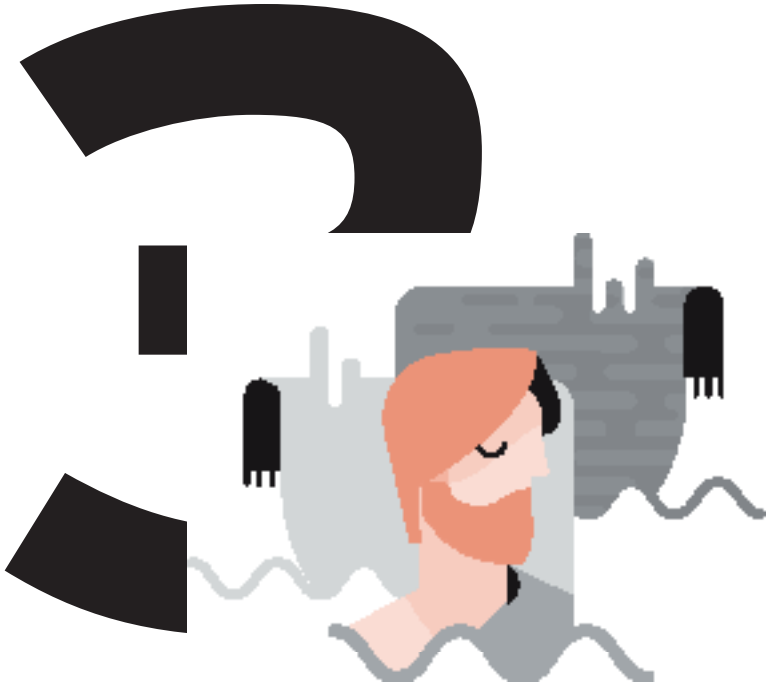


Unit .22

Session .03

Jesus Heals a Man at Bethesda

Scripture

John 5:2-18

2 By the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool,
called Bethesda in Aramaic, which has five colonnades.
3 Within these lay a large number of the disabled—
blind, lame, and paralyzed. **5** One man was there who
had been disabled for thirty-eight years. **6** When Jesus
saw him lying there and realized he had already been
there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to get
well?" **7** "Sir," the disabled man answered, "I have no
one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred
up, but while I'm coming, someone goes down ahead
of me." **8** "Get up," Jesus told him, "pick up your mat
and walk." **9** Instantly the man got well, picked up
his mat, and started to walk. Now that day was the
Sabbath, **10** and so the Jews said to the man who had
been healed, "This is the Sabbath. The law prohibits
you from picking up your mat." **11** He replied, "The
man who made me well told me, 'Pick up your mat
and walk.'" **12** "Who is this man who told you, 'Pick
up your mat and walk'?" they asked. **13** But the man
who was healed did not know who it was, because
Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.
14 After this, Jesus found him in the temple and said
to him, "See, you are well. Do not sin anymore, so
that something worse doesn't happen to you." **15** The
man went and reported to the Jews that it was Jesus
who had made him well. **16** Therefore, the Jews began
persecuting Jesus because he was doing these things on
the Sabbath. **17** Jesus responded to them, "My Father
is still working, and I am working also." **18** This is why
the Jews began trying all the more to kill him: Not only
was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling
God his own Father, making himself equal to God.

Intro Options

Main Point:
Jesus' grace in our life empowers us to obey Him.

Option 1

Your students are going to act or to draw a specific scenario. Before you give them the scenario, tell them to decide whether they want to act it out (in groups) or to draw it (as individuals).

Once students have made their choice, give them the scenario: Stranger A approaches Stranger B. The two strangers have never met before. Stranger A commands Stranger B to do something. Stranger B obeys.

They now have to create three different scenes showing how the above scenario could happen (for the drawers, stick figures are fine). For example, Stranger A might be a police officer in uniform, and so Stranger B would obey. Or maybe Stranger A has a gun and is commanding Stranger B to do something. Or maybe Stranger B is a new player to a team, and Stranger A is the coach. Or maybe Stranger A whips out a $100 bill and tells Stranger B she'll give it to him if he dances like a monkey for thirty seconds. *Note: if you don't have a lot of time, you can have students only create one or two scenes.

Give students time to prepare and then share their skits. What commonalities did you see? What kinds of things would compel someone to obey a complete stranger?

In today's scenario, a paralyzed man will obey Jesus. Jesus will work a miracle (healing the man), and the man will obey. Jesus' miracle-working shows His authority to command people, even when those commands contradict man-made laws.

Option 2

Your students are going to act or to draw a specific scenario. Before you give them the scenario, tell them to decide whether they want to act it out (in groups) or to draw it (as individuals).

Once students have made their choice, give them the scenario: Person A threatens or does something hostile to Person B. Person B responds to this mistreatment with confident joy.

They now have to create three different scenes showing how the above scenario could happen (for the drawers, stick figures are fine). For example, Person A might be a mugger who steals Person B's wallet or purse, but person B has just won the lottery, so he or she doesn't care. Another example might be that Person A is a schoolyard bully, but Person B has a big brother who's a black belt, or maybe Person B is a black belt herself. *Note: you can have students only create one or two scenes for lack of time.

Give students time to prepare and then share their skits. What commonalities did you see? What kinds of things would cause someone who's been mistreated to respond with confidence and joy?

In order for someone to respond to mistreatment with joy or boldness, the mistreated person has to have a cause, significance, or blessing that is far superior to any loss caused by mistreatment. In today's lesson, the Jews will begin to persecute Jesus, but their actions will only cause Him to express His mission more confidently, because His mission matters more than any mistreatment.

TEACHING PLAN

Read John 5:2-7.

The scene in John 5 opens up with a disheartening picture: people with diseases and disabilities lying within sight of a pool of water. Local legend held that when the water of the pool was stirred up, it had healing properties—but only for the first person into the pool. Out of the many people waiting for the movement of the water, Jesus singled out one hopeless man.

This man hadn't walked for most, if not all, of his life. He had to be dependent on people for the most basic of things: to take him places, to get food, to avoid danger. Eventually he learned to get around without help, but always much slower than everyone else hurrying along. His only hope for healing in the pool was always taken away from him by someone faster than him. His situation was hopeless as he stared at the pool of Bethesda and never reaped any of its supposed benefits.

Imagine how frustrating it might be to have a physical disability for so many years. Imagine the struggle of never finding a diagnosis for a sickness that plagues you. Perhaps you don't have to imagine. Regardless, we know that feeling helpless in our condition can lead to feeling hopeless in life.

- **What are some areas of life in which people may feel both helpless and hopeless?**

Jesus asked the man if he wanted to be well, and the man's response revealed he was filled with despair. His only focus for healing was the pool, and he couldn't get into the pool in time. Day after day, week after week, he saw other people beat him to it. On top of that, he had no one; he didn't have one friend or good Samaritan willing to wait by his side to help him into the pool. Being hurt, without hope, and alone is a recipe for despair.

Have you felt the sting of loneliness? Has it ever seemed like all the odds of life are stacked against you? Do you despair of ever having victory over sin in your life? If so, Jesus' question also reaches you: "Do you want to get well?" You likely won't find physical healing in a pool of stirring water, but you will find eternal life in the fountain of living water that Jesus provides (John 4:14).

Jesus is the ultimate healer; Jesus is the solution to our hopelessness and despair. His grace is sufficient for our struggles and failings, and His power is perfected in our weakness. Therefore, we don't need to despair but we can boast in our weaknesses because they display Christ's power in us (2 Cor. 12:9).

- **How do you see loneliness contribute to despair in the world?**

Read John 5:8-15.

Jesus healed the man not by taking him down into the pool of supposed powers but by commanding him to get up and walk. There is power in the word of the Son of God, and when Jesus speaks, diseased and disabled bodies obey.

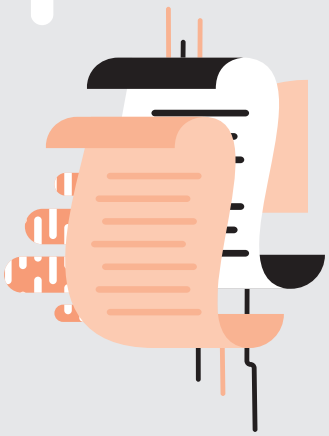
COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus' grace in our life empowers us to obey Him.

John 5

2. Until the 1890s, critics doubted this detail regarding the colonnades. Then the pool of Bethesda was excavated in Jerusalem and it turned out to have had five covered colonnades—four around the perimeter and one dividing the water into two compartments down the middle.

3-4. Verses 3b-4 are not found in the earliest copies of this text, and so, it is omitted from many Bible translations and included as a footnote. They are considered a later addition to clarify the appeal of the pool and why the man wanted to get in. These added verses reflect a common belief people had at this time, that an angel stirred the water every so often and the first person to enter into the bubbling water would be healed of whatever ailed them.[2]



99 Essential Doctrines (p. 24, DDG)

God is One in Three Persons

While the Bible affirms that God is one (Mark 12:29; 1 Cor. 8:4-6), it also affirms that God exists as three Persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. Each Person of the Trinity is fully divine—the Father is God (John 6:27), the Son is God (Phil. 2), the Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4)—and each Person is distinct from the others (Matt. 11:27; John 10:30; 14:16). This perfect unity within the three Persons of the Trinity is a first-order doctrine; departing from it is to abandon orthodox Christianity.

TEACHING PLAN

The man had not professed faith in Jesus or even asked for healing. He didn't even know who Jesus was! Nothing indicates that this man, of all the sick people lying there, deserved to be healed, yet this man experienced the grace of God in his healing. Immediately he obeyed Jesus' command to pick up his mat and walk. The man didn't get grace because he obeyed. Rather, he was given grace first and then was given the ability to obey in faith.

- **Why is it important to emphasize that grace comes before obedience?**
- **What happens to our obedience when we start trying to earn the grace God has already given to us through Jesus?**

Jesus later found the man who had been healed and told him to walk no longer in sin. Jesus cared about the man's whole being. Not only did the man need to be healed of his broken body, he needed to be healed spiritually as well. The ultimate purpose of the grace Jesus showed the man in healing him was so he might walk in holiness.

We have been granted spiritual healing for the same ultimate purpose, that we might walk in holiness, no longer enslaved to sin but living by faith in the Son of God who came to save us from sin (Gal. 2:20; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:5-6).

Why does God want us to walk in holiness? Because holiness reflects the freedom that Christ has secured for us through His death on the cross and subsequent resurrection. By faith in Him, our identity has changed—we are now a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17); therefore, to walk in sin is counter to who we are (Rom. 6:2).

- **What does it look like to walk in holiness in this world?**

Read John 5:16-18.

After it was determined that Jesus healed the man and "incited" him to break their Sabbath rules, the Jews turned their fury onto Jesus, as He seemed to show utter disregard for keeping the Sabbath. According to John, this incident sealed the Jews' negative opinion of Jesus, and their persecution of Him would eventually lead Jesus to the cross.

The Jews persecuted Jesus for His work, but they ramped up their efforts when they understood Jesus' claim as to His person—He is equal with God. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). In six days, He created the skies, the waters, the land, the celestial lights, birds and fish, plants, and animals. Finally, on the sixth day, God created human beings in His image. Then on the seventh day, He rested from this creative work.

But that didn't mean God stopped working in other ways. God has continued to work in preserving His creation, in providing for His creatures, and in His providence for His image bearers. Therefore, God is still working, just as Jesus said, and the Son of God follows in the steps of His Father by working without ceasing for the good of all creation.

God the Father and God the Son (and God the Holy Spirit) are distinct from one another, and yet, they are one. When Jesus called God "My Father," He was declaring, in part, the wonderful mystery of the Trinity. The Jews understood enough to know that Jesus' claim would have been blasphemous if He were not equal to God. They wanted to kill Him, but Jesus is indeed the Son of God, so they were rejecting the very One who made them.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus' grace in our life empowers us to obey Him.

John 5

16-18. Why did the Jews have such a hostile response to Jesus' miracle and commands?

First, Jesus told the man to carry his mat on the Sabbath. The Jews perceived this as a command to break the law of God to rest from work on the Sabbath, just as God had rested from His work in creation on the seventh day. This, however, was not a violation of the Sabbath law as handed down by God through Moses (Ex. 31:12-17) but a violation of Jewish tradition that a person could not carry an object from one domain to another.[3]

Second, Jesus Himself performed "work" on the Sabbath by healing the disabled man. To suit the Jews' legalistic mind-set, it seems Jesus should have waited just a few more hours before healing the disabled man. But instead, Jesus saw an opportunity to show compassion to a hopeless man, and He took it without hesitation, because this is what God does.

Activity

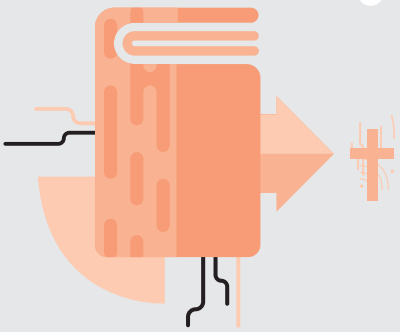
Pass out index cards to your students. Ask each student to come up with a short scenario of someone who is hopeless. The scenarios should be somehow realistic (nobody gets stranded on a foreign planet, or has their pet Tyrannosaurus die); they should also be anonymous and not use any names in case they are actual situations. If students need spurs to come up with ideas, they could think of people of different ages (someone left out at school, or a person in a nursing home who never gets any visits) or different economic statuses. Collect their cards after they've written a scenario.

Redistribute the cards at random among the students. Their job is now to make a drawing or a skit showing how trusting and obeying Jesus would bring hope to the hopeless situation they got on their card. Students can work together for skits as long as they show an answer for each card (e.g., if three students do a skit, they should make three scenes, one for each card). Trust and obedience in Jesus brought hope back to the despondent paralyzed man; how might the people on their cards find hope through Jesus?

Let students prepare and show their drawings and skits. What patterns do you see? How does knowing and utilizing specific Scriptures help us trust and obey in desperate circumstances? Who, in your students' lives, needs to hear words of hope this week? How can the students carry Jesus' hope to those people?

(p. 26, DDG) Christ Connection

The man at the pool of Bethesda had been disabled for many years and had lost all hope and given in to despair, but when Jesus told him to pick up his mat and walk, he was healed and he obeyed. In a similar way, our sin has left us hopeless and in despair, but Jesus invites us to trust in Him and follow Him. When we do, our sin is removed and we can follow Jesus in a life of obedience.



JESUS HEALS A MAN AT BETHESDA

John 5:2–18

JESUS HEALS A MAN AT BETHESDA

Jesus' grace in our life empowers us to obey Him.

JESUS CONNECTION

The man at the pool of Bethesda had been disabled for many years. He had lost hope and given into despair, but when Jesus told him to pick up his mat and walk, he was healed and obeyed. In a similar way, sin has left us hopeless and in despair, but Jesus invites us to trust in Him and follow Him. When we do, our sin is removed and we can follow Jesus in a life of obedience.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

HOPE – Expecting God will do what is best in every situation.

HEAD

What was the disabled man placing all his hope for healing in? Why had he lost hope in being healed at all?

How did the disabled man respond when Jesus healed him?

HEART

Jesus sought out the disabled man twice. First to heal him, and then to warn him of the consequences of sin. How can the fact that Jesus pursued this man give you hope when you want to give up?

Jesus healed the disabled man, but not in the way the disabled man thought he would be healed. Why might what you think is best not always be God's plan for you? Some people lose their hope in God when life doesn't go the way they wanted it to. How can you still have hope when God's plan for you isn't what you wanted or thought would be best?

HANDS

It's easier to have hope when we face hard things if we have support from others. We can't heal anyone, but we can do simple things that offer hope. Bringing a meal to someone who is sick, asking someone how they are doing, writing an encouraging note or simply being with those who are struggling are all ways to give hope to those around us. Ask God to point you to someone who is struggling, with something big or something small, and do one practical thing to encourage them this week.

When we are uncertain about what will happen next, it is easy to lose hope. While we can't know the future, we can remember who helped us and how we managed in the past. This week, think of someone who encouraged you in the past (a friend or family member, even God) and make it a point to thank them (in person, by text, in a note, in prayer) for their help and encouragement.